

How do you know if you have a cold or the flu?



After the typical hot Texas summer, everyone looks forward to cooler weather, but not the cold and flu season that comes with it. Understanding the difference between having a cold and having the flu can help determine the proper treatment for a faster recovery. Every flu season is different, and even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. There is no vaccine to prevent colds, but there is for the flu.

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated every year!

Cold

The common cold is a contagious upper respiratory infection caused by cold viruses, and should not last more than a week.

Flu

The flu is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses and can cause mild to severe illness. The flu can cause serious or life threatening complications for very young children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, heart disease or diabetes.

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever *the elderly may not have fever.	rare	(100.4°F and above) lasts 3-4 days
Headache	rare	severe
General Aches and Pains	slight	usual and often severe
Fatigue, Weakness, Tiredness	quite mild	early and severe, can last up to 2-3 weeks
Stuffy Nose	common	sometimes
Sneezing	usual	sometimes
Sore Throat	common	sometimes
Chest Discomfort	sometimes	common
Cough	dry, choking cough	can become severe

Cold Treatment

Since colds are caused by a virus, antibiotics will not cure it. However, if cold symptoms last longer than a week, you should go to the doctor because you could have a bacterial infection that may require antibiotics. To help you feel better while you are sick, get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids (i.e. water, clear juices or broths). If needed, use a humidifier to soothe dry air passages.

Flu Treatment

For the flu, there are prescription drugs available that can make your symptoms milder, help you feel better faster, and possibly prevent serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia. See your healthcare provider if your symptoms get worse, last a long time or include vomiting, high fever, chest pains or coughing with thick, yellow-green mucus.

Prevention

Practicing good health habits such as covering your cough, washing your hands often, and staying home when you are sick can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the cold and flu.

Keep countertops clean, especially when someone in your family is sick, and avoid sharing hand towels. Clean the areas where the most germs reside like doorknobs, faucets, remote controls, light switches, telephones and mobile devices.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), everyone who is at least six months of age or older should get the flu vaccine this season. For the 2016-17 season, CDC recommends use of the flu shot instead of the nasal spray flu vaccine.

Getting vaccinated is especially important for the following groups:

- Anyone with certain medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic lung disease.
- Pregnant women
- Young children
- Anyone 65 years of age and older.
- Anyone who lives with or cares for others who are at high risk of developing serious complications.

Harris County Public Health offers the flu vaccine for \$12.00 at our health clinics. To make an appointment, please call our Patient Appointment Call Center at **(713) 212-6800**. For more information visit our website at www.hcphtx.org.

Antoine Health Clinic 5815 Antoine, Suite A Houston, Texas 77091	Baytown Health Clinic 1000 Lee Drive Baytown, Texas 77520
Humble Health Clinic 1730 Humble Place Drive Humble, Texas 77338	Southeast Health Clinic 3737 Red Bluff Road Pasadena, Texas 77503

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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